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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3892
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 1736
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0987
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RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1456
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 BANGKOK 003396

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/RSP
PACOM FOR FPA HUSO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: ASEAN-U.S. DIALOGUE HELD IN BANGKOK MAY 23

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. During the May 23 ASEAN-U.S. Dialogue, ASEAN members and the United States expressed confidence that a joint Plan of Action to implement the ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced Partnership would be ready for the Secretary and Foreign Ministers to approve during the ASEAN Ministers meeting in Kuala Lumpur on July 27. Several ASEAN members suggested we jointly identify development projects to implement shortly after the Plan of Action is approved to signify the importance of the enhanced relationship. A/S Hill told ASEAN members that, while the United States welcomes growing integration within Asia, we need to work to ensure that regional institutions such as APEC, ARF, EAS, ASEAN and others work in concert rather than in competition with each other. A/S Hill briefed the delegates on the status of the Six Party Talks and recent developments in the Middle East. ASEAN representatives outlined recent steps the organization has taken to combat regional terrorism and transnational crime. On global issues, representatives agreed on the need to build on recent collaborative efforts to mitigate disasters, combat infectious disease and promote sustainable development. Thai PermSec Krit raised the candidacy of Thai Deputy Prime Minister Surakiart for UN Secretary General, urging U.S. support. END SUMMARY.

OPENING REMARKS

12. (SBU) On May 23, EAP Assistant Secretary Christopher R. Hill and Thai MFA Permanent Secretary Krit Garnjana-Goonchorn co-chaired in Bangkok the 19th ASEAN-U.S. Dialogue. Ambassador Boyce and EAP Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric John also attended the Dialogue. Para 20 provides a delegation list. In his opening remarks, which were covered by the press, Krit spoke of the importance of America's role in SE Asia and the need for the U.S.-ASEAN partnership to adapt to meet new challenges ranging from terrorism to avian influenza. A/S Hill assured the ASEAN representatives that the United States is committed to enhancing its relationship with ASEAN in all aspects. Hill underscored the importance of ASEAN pressing the Burmese regime to implement genuine political reform. The Assistant Secretary also emphasized the importance of regional fora working in concert and not duplicating efforts.

ASEAN-U.S. PLAN OF ACTION

¶3. (SBU) During plenary discussion of the joint Plan of Action to implement the ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced Partnership, PermSec Krit noted the common goal of concluding a Plan of Action that could be approved by the Secretary during the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) in Kuala Lumpur on July 27. Krit suggested that the Plan of Action could serve as a road map for governments to address key political, security, economic and transnational issues. Krit also said that ASEAN welcomed the U.S. proposal to appoint an Ambassador to ASEAN and expressed hope that the United States would endorse the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. EAP DAS Eric John expressed confidence that, although a draft Plan of Action was not quite ready yet, a final document would be prepared in time for the PMC. Representatives from Singapore, Malaysia and Cambodia expressed their common hope that all parties could identify several easy-to-implement projects to demonstrate concrete benefits of the Plan of Action as a way to capitalize on momentum after the PMC.

DEVELOPMENTS IN ASEAN

¶4. (SBU) The representative from Laos gave a general overview of the three pillars of the developing ASEAN community -- security, economic and socio-cultural. He noted the importance of the recent ASEAN Defense Ministers' meeting, the shared goal of creating an ASEAN Common Market and how ASEAN supports other fora such as the ARF, EAS and ASEAN plus 3.

¶5. (SBU) A/S Hill told the delegates that the United States looks forward to the development of the ASEAN Charter which will help build the ASEAN Community by 2020. Hill assured

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the group that the United States wants to be a part of ASEAN's growing integration and wishes to collaborate with ASEAN to identify key areas of common interest, such as counter terrorism, maritime security and non-proliferation. The delegate from Malaysia said that his country hopes the United States will also pay equal attention to development issues, including working with ASEAN to identify projects ready for ASEAN-U.S. co-funding. The Malaysian and Cambodian representatives suggested that the member states plan appropriate activities to commemorate the 30th anniversary of U.S.-ASEAN relations. In response to the Indonesian delegate's suggestion that the U.S. study a recent Australian project to help fund university education for Indonesian youth, A/S Hill noted ongoing U.S. efforts aimed at assisting Indonesian primary, secondary and university students. Hill went on to brief the group on recent meetings his staff had had with Brunei aimed at identifying collaborative development projects.

EAST ASIA SUMMIT

¶6. (SBU) The Malaysian representative outlined the results of the first EAS meeting which took place in Kuala Lumpur on December 14, 2005. At that meeting, it was agreed that ASEAN would remain the lead group shaping the direction of the EAS.

Ambassador Hill stressed the need to insure that all multilateral institutions in Asia work in concert and avoid redundancy. While emphasizing that the United States welcomes enhanced relations among Asian states, Hill asked ASEAN to work carefully to make sure that security discussions within the EAS did not undermine the utility of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and that EAS economic talks meshed with APEC goals. The Singaporean delegate suggested that overlapping organizations fit the Asian psyche better than rigid structures with legalistic formats. The representative from the Philippines offered her opinion that the EAS might be better suited as a forum in which national leaders could discuss broader issues while ARF, being a Minister-level forum, might be better suited for discussing details.

NORTH KOREA

17. (SBU) A/S Hill briefed the ASEAN delegates on the status of the Six Party Talks, including North Korea's refusal to return to the Talks and begin negotiations to implement the September 19 joint agreement following U.S. actions against DPRK illicit activities in Macao. Hill underscored that the United States does not see these two issues as related and will not "pay" North Korea to return to the negotiating table. Hill outlined the array of possible incentives offered under the September agreement far outweighs the North Korean funds frozen in Macao, calling into question whether the North Koreans actually are committed to dismantling their nuclear programs. PermSec Krit offered Thai support for the Six Party Talks and suggested that ASEAN should focus on meeting North Korean humanitarian needs through the ARF. Representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia and Cambodia asked Hill how individual ASEAN countries and/or the group as a whole could support the process of ensuring peace on the Korean peninsula. Hill responded that the Six Party Talks remain the key to successfully resolving the issues at hand. ASEAN states are welcome to engage with Pyongyang bilaterally, but in every meeting should emphasize that the Six Party Talks are the only mechanism for resolution of the nuclear issue.

IRAQ, MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS, IRAN AND LIBYA

18. (SBU) A/S Hill began the discussion on the Middle East with an outline of developments in Iraq, including the formation of the new government and the U.S. request for other nations to publicly offer support to the new regime. Turning to the Middle East peace process, Hill explained that the U.S. is pressuring Hamas to meet the quartet principles, while reprogramming funds to meet Palestinian humanitarian needs. The United States wants to maintain international

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unity in pressing Hamas to change its policy calling for the destruction of Israel and hold Hamas to Palestinian commitments in the peace process. Iran is a very serious problem, as evinced by Tehran's disregard for international concern over its nuclear program, support for terrorism and serious human rights problems. Iran's recent decision to enrich uranium illustrates Tehran's unwillingness to listen to the international community, including the UN. The United States remains committed to a diplomatic solution and recognizes the right of the Iranian people to develop nuclear technology for energy producing purposes, but cannot accept an Iranian nuclear weapon program, Hill said. Hill noted the recent decision to establish diplomatic relations with Libya after Tripoli eliminated its WMD programs.

19. (SBU) The Malaysian delegate welcomed the improvement in U.S.-Libyan relations but noted that the Palestinian people have spoken in a democratic election and the new Hamas government should be supported. In addition, Malaysia welcomes U.S. support for a peaceful Iranian nuclear energy program, adding that Iran is likely to be a hot topic at the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting late this month in Kuala Lumpur. The Indonesian representative asked when U.S. and coalition forces will leave Iraq. A/S Hill explained that the coalition forces cannot set a timetable for withdrawal, but are doing all they can to train and equip Iraqi forces to meet the security challenges in that country.

COUNTERTERRORISM

10. (SBU) DAS John reviewed the successes that growing counterterrorism cooperation in the region have engendered, including the arrest of the Bali bombers in Indonesia. Worldwide, collective efforts have harmed al-Qaida and prevented its leaders from maintaining effective global command and control of its networks. DAS John explained that our strategy is structured to combat terrorism at multiple

levels and emphasized the important role ASEAN countries play in combating terrorism. The Philippine representative outlined the series of ASEAN actions taken to support improved regional counterterrorism cooperation, such as the Senior Officials Meetings on Transnational Crime, and increasingly frequent military, police and intelligence meetings to discuss the issue. Manila welcomes UNSYG Koffi Annan's call to develop a global strategy on counterterrorism. Counterterrorism efforts should focus less on military, "hard" power and more on the "soft" power that wins hearts and minds. The Philippine delegate also called on the United States "to do more" such as fostering the type of ASEAN-U.S. economic integration that will help combat the root causes of poverty and hopelessness.

TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

¶12. (SBU) DAS John turned to the wide range of transnational crime issues, outlining regional progress and opportunities for further action on counternarcotics, counterproliferation, human trafficking, maritime security, cybercrime and anticorruption. The representative from Burma responded with a comprehensive review of ASEAN statements and meetings on these issues over the past several years, and specifically thanked the United States for technical support on these issues.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

¶13. (SBU) Before breaking for lunch, the Indonesian representative addressed the issue of disaster preparedness, highlighting current concerns over the potential eruption of Mt. Merapi in East Java and the need to follow through on regional disaster relief planning and tsunami early warning systems integration before another tragedy strikes. Jakarta is particularly interested in U.S. assistance to integrate the national warning systems into a region-wide system. USAID Regional Development Mission (RDM) Director Tim Beans highlighted U.S. assistance following the December 2004 tsunami which included over 400 million dollars in

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nonmilitary aid to Indonesia and the August 2005 launch of the U.S.-Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS). The Thai delegation expressed appreciation of U.S. post-tsunami disaster relief and work on early warning systems.

ECONOMIC AND TRADE ISSUES

¶14. (SBU) At the working breakfast before the Dialogue, U.S. ASEAN Business Council (USABC) Director Matt Daley said that his organization is looking to A/S Hill and the USG for ideas on how to move ASEAN forward on a range of economic and trade issues. Hill said that ASEAN member Vietnam's hosting of this year's APEC Leaders' Meeting and President Bush's attendance will put ASEAN on the map for the U.S. public and government. Daley suggested that appointing a U.S. Ambassador to ASEAN would be an inexpensive, symbolically important gesture underlining the U.S. commitment to ASEAN.

15 (SBU) During a lunch for Dialogue representatives hosted by the USABC, the Singapore representative noted the trend of falling foreign direct investment (FDI) in the ASEAN region owing to the appeal of India and China. A way to counteract this in the long term, he said, is for ASEAN to form itself into a single market. In the short term, Ho said that ideas from the business community were needed on ways to make ASEAN a more desirable destination for FDI. Daley endorsed this idea, adding his view that a U.S.-ASEAN FTA is a desirable long term goal. Lunch participants highlighted several possible areas where ASEAN could improve the business climate. These include energy security; energy efficiency; resolution of boundary disputes; and harmonization of standards. Several participants reported firms' difficulties

in obtaining U.S. business visas in a timely manner.

16 (SBU) In the after-lunch discussion attended by USABC members together with U.S. and ASEAN government representatives, views were exchanged on the proposed U.S.-ASEAN Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), the U.S. Container Security Initiative (CSI), intellectual property issues, market access for agricultural products, foreign direct investment, and Vietnam's continued progress toward accession to the WTO. The group also discussed APEC and the upcoming APEC Leaders' Meetings in Vietnam as well as the WTO Doha Round negotiations. U.S. representatives stressed that time was running out for a deal, and appealed to ASEAN representatives to redouble their efforts to move the process forward across the entire Doha agenda. The U.S. stated its strong opposition to a scaled back "Doha Lite" solution.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE - AVIAN FLU

¶17. (SBU) The Cambodian delegate reviewed recent regional progress on addressing Avian Influenza (AI), highlighting the success of Vietnamese and Thai programs. He thanked the U.S. for our pledge of 334 million dollars at the Beijing Donors' Conference and welcomed U.S. work with ASEAN on AI as part of our Enhanced Partnership. He emphasized the importance of cooperation between ASEAN and the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S., noting the devastating impact a pandemic would have on the regions' economies. ASEAN members requested that the U.S. continue to work with ASEAN to expand capacity to deal with a pandemic and to provide additional resources. The Malaysian delegate specifically called for greater access to stockpiles of drugs and said the U.S. should help ASEAN nations produce their own drugs. USAID RDM Director Beans highlighted U.S. assistance to combat AI, noting that in FY06 the U.S. had provided more than 70 million in assistance to Southeast Asia. Beans invited ASEAN countries to send representatives to the next International Partnership on Avian And Pandemic Influenza Senior Official meeting to be held June 6-7 in Vienna.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

¶18. (SBU) USAID RDM Director Beans outlined the wide range of U.S.-supported initiatives which protect biodiversity and

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promote sustainable development in the ASEAN region -- including the President's Initiative Against Illegal Logging.

The ASEAN secretariat representative thanked the U.S. for cooperation on environmental issues, in particular on CITES. He highlighted the Council of State Governments program, which is providing unique collaborative environmental assistance to select ASEAN cities. ASEAN members urged expanded cooperation with the U.S., including technology transfers to support environmental projects, and that the U.S. share its experiences with water resource management. RDM Director Beans said USAID was ready to expand assistance in the water sector, and outlined several programs.

THAI CANDIDATE FOR UNSYG

¶19. (SBU) At the end of the meeting, Thai Permsec Krit raised the candidacy of Thai Deputy Prime Minister Surakiart Santhianthai for UN Secretary General and urged U.S. support.

Krit emphasized that Surakiart remained the ASEAN candidate and that ASEAN members believe that it was "Asia's turn" to be UNSYG. A/S Hill indicated that it was U.S. policy not to discuss the U.S. selection.

¶20. (U) PARTICIPANTS

U.S. DELEGATION

EAP Assistant Secretary Christopher R. Hill
Ambassador Ralph Boyce

EAP Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric John
Chris Marut, EAP/RSP Director
Jack Andre, EAP/RSP Officer
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¶21. (U) This cable was cleared by Washington on June 5,
¶2006.
BOYCE